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SUBJECT: YOUTHS PROTEST IN SIGUIRI, NEAR GUINEA-MALI BORDER

REF: A. CONAKRY 0480  
    B. CONAKRY 0599  
    C. CONAKRY 0664

¶1. (U) On November 12, youths in Siguiri organized a mass demonstration against the local gold mining company, SAG (South African AngloGold Ashanti Ltd). Civil society leaders had written a letter to SAG last week requesting that the company improve its provision of electricity to Siguiri and surrounding villages. They reportedly demanded that SAG comply with the request by November 12. Late in the evening on November 11, local youths began mobilizing for a mass demonstration the following day saying that the company had failed to meet the community's demands.

¶2. (U) On the morning of November 12, several contacts told Embassy staff that the protestors had barricaded the main routes connecting Siguiri to the Ashanti Gold Mine facility, located approximately 35 kilometers from the town. Several hundred youths reportedly gathered on the main road between the mine and Siguiri. Security forces responded to peacefully control the crowd. According to a contact, one youth was severely beaten by protestors when he attempted to intervene and encouraged the protestors to be patient with SAG. Embassy did not receive any reports of security personnel using undue force.

¶3. (U) Siguiri, a town of 50,000 located near Guinea's border with Mali, effectively shut down on November 12 due to the protest activity. Most businesses were reportedly closed, although vehicle traffic continued to circulate within city limits. SAG company vehicles were not out on the roads.

¶4. (U) As of November 13, contacts reported that Siguiri and the surrounding areas were calm. Local authorities, SAG representatives, civil society leaders, and a Conakry delegation from the Ministry of Mines planned to meet during the day to discuss a mutually agreeable solution.

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COMMENT  
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¶5. (U) The Siguiri protests follow on several recent protests in the Boke and Kindia regions (reftels). Local populations have been demanding that the big mining companies start providing improved basic public services, such as electricity and running water, to local communities. The government usually sends a delegation to intervene and the situation eventually calms down. However, there has been a marked increase in protest activity in the mining towns over the past few months. Extreme poverty, endemic corruption, and weak centralized governance continue to encourage communities to look to local industrial giants to meet basic needs. END COMMENT.

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